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Faith–Science Issues: An Epistemological Perspective

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I found myself standing before a large memorial boulder in a quiet section of the city of Constance, Germany. On one side was inscribed the name Huss, on the other, Jerome. I was deep in concentration for a number of minutes—what would it be like to surrender one’s life rather than compromise the authority of the Bible as the Word of God?

After moments of meditation, like any good tourist, I got out my camera to take a picture. It was not until then that I realized that an elderly woman was sitting on a park bench beside the boulder. The camera startled her. She immediately stood up, circled the boulder several times with her gaze constantly fixed back and forth between the camera and the stone and then took off down the street in bewilderment, wondering why any American would be interested in the rock. I imagined this woman growing up just a block from the boulder, yet never realizing its significance.

I then thought of our church. We grew up with the Rock, the Word of God. But did we understand its significance? We were the people of the book. Our mission was tied to its message. But did we comprehend what it meant to say that the Bible was the authority not only for our theology but also for our life?

For example, we acknowledge that secularism and materialism are fundamentally opposed to the Biblical message, for they are humanistic at their foundation. Yet we appear at times to argue for the relevance of other equally humanistic methods, such as empiricism and rationalism. We may see them as producing criteria for our acceptance of truth in the Bible and as providing a foundation for our lives. We make a clear distinction between the material world that God has given us to use and enjoy and the materialism that makes material goods the god of our lives. Yet we fail to make that same distinction between reason and rationalism and the five senses and empiricisms. We critique the world within which we live for its commercialism, immorality, and materialism, yet we accept its humanistic epistemology as providing the framework within which the world should be known, understood, and lived.

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We seek a rock-solid foundation upon which to build our faith—a foundation built upon the unmovable successes of reason, science, and mathematics, and in so doing, we fail to recognize that we have just made them the foundation of our life.

This essay does not argue against the use of reason and science. It does not deny the validity of understanding the structure of our existence. But it does speak against rationalism, empiricism, existentialism, and any other form of humanism that makes some aspect of mankind the foundation and measure of all things. That role should be reserved for God and His Word alone. The Bible provides the foundation and structure for our understanding of the natural world, rather than the other way around.

The fundamental issue in the debate between theistic evolution and special creation is the question of authority and knowledge. How do I know what I know, and upon what foundation is it possible for me to have an understanding of the world in which I live?

Epistemology is the path we take. Our destination is determined by our epistemology. This in turn has implications for our self understanding, the purpose of our existence, our knowledge of the world in which we live, our concept of what the universe is like, and finally, who God is. When our epistemology changes, our concept of the universe and of God changes as well.

We live in a world that is bombarded from all sides with humanistic ways of thinking. From the classroom, to the news media, to television programs, to everyday life in the work place, we are taught to think humanistically. This essay will call for a paradigm shift from humanism to Biblical thinking.

It is a bit presumptuous of me to attempt to present the topic of epistemology at this conference, since there are so many who are better qualified than I. Also, how can a topic so little studied in Adventist circles be covered in thirty minutes? We will only attempt a brief and somewhat simplified tour of history, the Bible, and E. G. White.

Historical Overview

Greek Thinking

Socrates—Knowledge is innate in the human mind. It is achieved by reminiscence.

Plato/Neo-Platonism—The truly real is the Form or the transcendent Idea. Knowledge emanates from this Form to the mind. The Form is perfect and eternal, whereas the concrete phenomena are transient and imperfect. The material world is something to be left behind on the way to absolute knowledge.

Aristotle—The empirical world is fully real—reason is employed to discover an order inherent within the empirical world itself. Yet, the mind is regarded not only as activated by sensory experience, but also by something eternally active, immortal, and divine, totally apart from the sensory world.

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Thus, in spite of his empiricism, it was his rationalism that dominated the history of Aristotelian thought. Aristotle posited an ideal Form, pure Mind, a Supreme Being towards which everything was drawn—the Unmoved Mover. This Prime Mover was the ultimate cause of all other celestial movement, the planets, moon, and finally movement on earth. Earth was at the center of the universe, not because of its grand importance, but because things moved according to their intrinsic nature—heavier elements, water, and earth moved to the center of the universe, and lighter elements, air, fire, and anything divine moved intrinsically upward. The sun and the planets moved in circles around the earth. Why? Partaking of divinity, they were perfect. A circle is obviously perfect. Therefore, the natural path of non-earthly things was circular rather than linear. Thus, the planets, by nature of their divinity, orbited the earth in a circle. A very complex mathematical formula was used to explain the observed elliptical orbit of the planets. Finally, the Hellenistic astronomer Ptolemy codified this earth-centered view by positing epicycles and eccentrics to explain what was observed. The theory was self-sustaining, because the discovery of new discrepancies could be explained by additional epicycles, etc.

Early church—Dominated by Neo-Platonic thinking. The universe was ordered by a hierarchy, from perfect eternal forms to earthly imperfect instances of these forms. Knowledge emanated from the eternal forms through the hierarchy, and the goal of earthly instances was to return to the eternal form. Thus, for example, the idea of the natural immortality of the soul was brought into the Christian church.

Scholasticism of the Middle Ages—Dominated by Aristotelian scholasticism. Thomas Aquinas represents the most developed theology of the middle ages. For Him, the task of the theologian was to synthesize the truths of nature, i.e., the philosophy of Aristotle (who obviously described the nature of the natural world) with the spiritual insight of the Bible. His model was the *Bible and nature* (the philosophy of Aristotle). Thus he was within the tradition of the Roman Catholic Church, where theology was of necessity based upon the *Bible and nature, tradition, the pope, and philosophy*. Aquinas's God began to take on the character of the Unmoved Mover instead of the active God of the Bible. The Bible, while considered the supreme authority, became encased within the philosophy of the age.

Reformation Era—The reformation responded with the Bible and the *Bible alone* as the foundation and guide to life. The slogan “the *Bible alone*” did not rule out other methods of knowing. It affirmed that the *Bible alone* was the foundation. This meant that the Bible was not to be interpreted by alien philosophies or methods. It was to be its own interpreter.

The principle of the *Bible alone* brought about new freedoms and responsibilities. The individual was no longer beholden to his place in the universe—subject to king, pope and church. He was now himself accountable to

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God, and God was directly accessible to him. The structures of existence were challenged by the Word of God, and human freedom was the result.

Aristotelian Scholasticism—At the time of the Counter Reformation, there was a resurgence of Aristotelian scholasticism. Tradition was *the* authority—not simple church tradition, but particularly the philosophical tradition stemming from Aristotle. The cosmology of Ptolemy reigned supreme. It was obviously true because it coincided best with the Aristotelian scholastic synthesis that so perceptively described the nature of reality. Scripture and nature were to be understood by the presumptive authority of the past, the traditions of the church, and particularly the intellectual traditions of the scholastics. Things were categorized by their degrees of perfections, which defined a great chain of being which allowed one to know contemplatively the value of all things. The scale of perfections placed God at the top. There was a divide between the mutable things of the earth and the immutable things of the heavens.

The earth was at the center of the universe. The heavenly bodies were higher on the scale of perfection and therefore operated by different laws than earthly objects, which were imperfect.

The Scientific Revolution and Enlightenment Philosophy

Cosmology—The era of the Enlightenment took place within the context of the freedoms opened up by the Reformation on the one hand, and as a reaction to the authority and rigidity of scholastic philosophy on the other. This new freedom opened the world to the development of modern science and new philosophical understandings.

A series of observations made by Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, and Newton brought an entirely new understanding of cosmology. The earth was not the center of the universe with all planetary bodies revolving around it. Rather, the earth was itself a planet in orbit with the other planets around the sun.

This new understanding brought into question the entire scholastic tradition. The planetary movements were discovered to be elliptical rather than the implied perfection of circular motion. Stars were discovered that had not been seen by Aristotle. The moon had mountains (and therefore was not perfectly circular), and the sun had spots. Thus, these bodies were not the incorruptible and immutable heavenly objects of Aristotelian-Ptolemaic philosophy. Objects fell to the ground because of gravity, not because they were trying to find their natural and rightful place in the universe. Therefore, circular motion was not natural to heavenly bodies, for they also would move in a straight line if it were not for the pull of gravity upon them. Thus planets remained in orbit by the same laws that caused rocks to fall to the ground. The dichotomy between the celestial and terrestrial realms was broken. The same laws that applied on earth also applied to the heavens. The heavens were also composed of material substances, and their movements were impelled by natural mechanical forces according to mathematical laws.

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The absolute authority of Aristotelian tradition was called into question. Scholasticism had sought a synthesis between nature and religion. When scholasticism fell, a schism developed between science and religion. The Bible had been so fully reinterpreted by Greek philosophy that it also was caught in the undertow. Science was now autonomous not only from human tradition but also from Biblical guidance.

Philosophy

Francis Bacon—Bacon rejected the stale orthodoxies inherited from Scholasticism as airy speculation in magic and alchemy. Experience and experimentation were the only legitimate methods for arriving at knowledge of the natural world. As Richard Tarnas writes,

The true basis of knowledge was the natural world and the information it provided through the human senses. To fill the world with assumed final causes, as did Aristotle, or with intelligible divine essences, as did Plato, was to obscure from man a genuine understanding of nature on its own terms, solidly based on direct experimental contact and inductive reasoning from particulars. No longer should the pursuer of knowledge start from abstract definitions and verbal distinctions and then reason deductively, forcing the phenomena into prearranged order. Instead, he must begin with the unbiased analysis of concrete data and only then reason inductively, and cautiously, to reach general, empirically supported conclusions.¹

The spiritual and the natural realms had their own laws and appropriate, distinct method. Science must not be hampered by irrelevant assumptions from the religious imagination of scholastic theology. Science and religion will both be better served if they are kept separate.

Descartes—The crumbling fortification of the scholastic synthesis produced a new skepticism about the possibility of certain knowledge. Descartes set about solving this problem of skepticism by systematically doubting everything, including the existence of the physical world and his own body. At the end of this exercise, there was one thing that could not be doubted—the certainty of his self-awareness—I think, therefore I am. From the certainty of his self-awareness he argued for the existence of God. From the existence of God he argued for the reality of the natural world, for a perfect God who lets humans discern self-evident truths through reason would not deceive man.

In contrast to mind, all physical phenomena are to be comprehended as machines. The laws of mechanics are identical to those of nature, nature can be measured, and therefore mathematics, available to the light of human reason, was the tool for understanding the universe. Analytic reason *alone* was the basis for understanding the natural world.

¹ *The Passion of the Western Mind* (New York: Harmony, 1991), 273.

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Tarnas summarizes Descartes' philosophy as follows:

Thus human reason establishes first its own existence, out of experiential necessity, then God's existence, out of logical necessity, and thence the God-guaranteed reality of the objective world and its rational order. Descartes enthroned human reason as the supreme authority in matters of knowledge, capable of distinguishing certain metaphysical truth and of achieving certain scientific understanding of the material world. Infallibility, once ascribed only to Holy Scripture or the supreme pontiff, was now transferred to human reason itself. In effect, Descartes unintentionally began a theological Copernican revolution, for his mode of reasoning suggested that God's existence was established by human reason and not vice versa. Although the self-evident certainty of God's existence was guaranteed by God's benevolent veracity in creating a reliable human reason, that conclusion could be affirmed only on the basis of the clear-and-distinct-idea criterion, in which authority was fundamentally rooted in a judgment by the individual human intellect. In the ultimate religious question, not divine revelation but the natural light of human reason had the final say. Until Descartes, revealed truth had maintained an objective authority outside of human judgment, but now its validity began to be subject to affirmation by human reason. The metaphysical independence that Luther had demanded within the parameters of the Christian religion, Descartes now intimated more universally. For whereas Luther's foundational certainty was his faith in God's saving grace as revealed in the Bible, Descartes's foundational certainty was his faith in the procedural clarities of mathematical reasoning applied to the indubitability of the thinking self.

Moreover, by his assertion of the essential dichotomy between thinking substance and extended substance, Descartes helped emancipate the material world from its long association with religious belief, freeing science to develop its analysis of that world in terms uncontaminated by spiritual or human qualities and unconstrained by the theological dogma. Both the human mind and the natural world now stood autonomously as never before, separated from God and from each other.

Here, then, was the prototypical declaration of the modern self, established as a fully separate, self-defining entity, for whom its own rational self-awareness was absolutely primary—doubting everything except itself, setting itself in opposition not only to traditional authorities but to the world, as subject against object, as a thinking, observing, measuring, manipulating being, fully distinct from an objective God and an external nature. The fruit of the dualism between rational subject and material world was science, including science's capacity for rendering certain knowledge of that world and for making man "master possessor of nature." In Descartes's vision, science, progress, reason, epistemological certainty, and human identity were all inextricably connected with each other and with the conception of

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an objective, mechanistic universe; and upon this synthesis was founded the paradigmatic character of the modern world.²

Mankind was now free not only from the dictates of tradition, church, and king, but also from scripture.

Locke—Locke was the reigning epistemological authority in Europe during the seventeenth century. He provided the epistemological foundations for its scientific achievements. For Lock, ideas are not innate, as with Descartes, but rather our mind is a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate to be written upon by our sense experience of the world. We know because our experience of the world is imprinted upon our own mind by the senses and reflection. We cannot know apart from our experience. The authority of *experience alone* over against intuition and reason is the source of our knowledge both of the external and internal world.

Deism—The new epistemology brought a new view of God. God was now the divine architect who set the universe in motion, but he was not the Man of Calvary who is active in history and who will return in a literal manner a second time. The universe was to be explained on mechanical and mathematical principles. These principles were to be sought through observation and analysis, not by scholastic ideas or divine revelation. Providence and God's love was now reinterpreted to mean God's action in the creation and design of the ordered universe, but not His action with particular individuals or specific historical events. God did not reveal Himself to a particular people at a particular time; His revelation of Himself is universal through nature. Faith is based upon evidence and reason, not the gift of God.

Effects of the Era of Enlightenment

1. The nature and source of knowledge of the natural world is not to be determined by special revelation. It is to be discovered by some aspect of humanity, primarily by science.

2. Doubt was crucial to the process of acquisition of knowledge. Everything was to be questioned until one arrived at an absolute starting point.

3. "Faith," if it had any meaning at all, was founded upon and harmonious with the results of the scientific process.

4. In general, there was a radical separation of theology and natural inquiry. If there was a relationship between science and theology, the foundation was scientific. Special revelation could not be used as a starting point for the study of the natural world.

5. Science was king. Historian of science Bernard Cohen put it in almost religious terms:

² Ibid, 279–280.

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The greatest achievement of Newtonian science must ever be the first full explanation of the universe on mechanical principles. One set of axioms and laws of universal gravitation applied to matter everywhere on earth as it did in the heavens. Who, after studying the contribution to thought, could deny that *pure science* [italics supplied] exemplifies this creative accomplishment of the human spirit at its pinnacle? What an exalted view of science. What a transforming view Newton gave to all humans. In all different endeavors the optimistic view that humans could deduce the order of the natural world had a significant trickle down effect in other human endeavors.³

Science had become the way, the truth, and the life.

6. Freedom was absolute. Humanity was no longer under the bondage of Greek metaphysics, scholastic theology, the church, tradition, or the authority of the Bible. As Tarnas puts it,

While the classical Greek world view had emphasized the goal of human intellectual and spiritual activity as the essential unification (or reunification) of man with the cosmos and its divine intelligence, and while the Christian goal was to reunite man and the world with God, the modern goal was to create the greatest possible freedom for man—from nature; from oppressive political, social, or economic structures; from restrictive metaphysical or religious beliefs; from the Church; from the Judaeo-Christian God; from the static and finite Aristotelian-Christian cosmos; from medieval Scholasticism; from the ancient Greek authorities; from all primitive conceptions of the world. Leaving behind tradition generally for the power of the autonomous human intellect, modern man set out on his own, determined to discover the working principles of his new universe, to explore and further expand its new dimensions, and to realize his secular fulfillment.⁴

Humanity had come of age. There was no need for God to look over our shoulder telling us how to live or what to believe. The tutelage of God our Father was not necessary to understand the universe. That can be done on our own, for we are autonomous from God and His Word. Whoever or whatever God is, if he exists at all—we will decide that—He must conform to whatever we discover to be true in the natural world.

Possible Relations between Science and Scripture—This very brief history of the theory of knowledge as it relates to religion has pointed to several possible relations between human studies and the Bible. The following are not exhaustive. I would welcome additional suggestions.

1. Human studies—science, philosophy, history, psychology, etc.—are *alone* the absolute foundation for all knowledge, whether it comes from nature or from the Bible. In this view, whatever is truth in the Bible (if anything at all)

³ I. Bernard Cohen, transcribed from a lecture tape; further details not available.

⁴ Tarnas, 290.

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must be verified by and interpreted within the context of humanism. Nature can be understood *completely* on its own terms. There is no valid truth in the Bible apart from human verification. Human study *alone* provides the way, the truth, and the life.

2. Truth is truth wherever it may be found. Nature *and* the Bible both bring a valid approach to knowledge. It is the task of the theologian to integrate the truths of these two sources of knowledge. Both of these disciplines may be understood *completely* separate from each other; but since there is truth in both, there is value in synthesizing these truths. Human *and* religious studies provide the way, the truth, and the life.

3. The realms of nature and of the Bible are radically separate. Science deals with nature *alone*, and the Bible deals with religion *alone*. The two do not intersect. Both may be understood *completely* on their own. Since there is no connection between them, it is useless to try to synthesize them.

4. God has revealed himself both in nature and in the Bible. Nature by itself is misleading. Both may be legitimately studied from the standpoint of the Bible and the Bible *alone*. Christ *alone* as He is represented in His Word is the way, the truth, and the life.

The Bible and Epistemology
Biblical Examples of Epistemology

Eve—Eve was tempted on the point of allegiance to God’s Word. On what basis would she make her decision on how to relate to the tree in the center of the Garden? Satan started her out with doubt. “Has God not said?” She then questioned the validity of God’s Word. Next she tried science. She gathered the evidence—it looks good to eat. Furthermore, the Serpent has partaken of it and now has increased powers. If I partake, I can also expect increased powers. She also used philosophy. A God of love would not destroy a person whom He created, nor would He withhold such beautiful fruit from His creation.

Antediluvians—Science has determined that it will not rain. Furthermore, philosophy tells us that a God of love would not destroy his creatures.

Kadesh-barnea—The ten spies returned from Canaan doubting the command of God. No God in his right mind would take Israel into battle in Canaan. Fortified passes needed to be crossed, there were giants in the land, the armies were well equipped and trained, and there were great walls around the cities.

Noah—by faith Noah heeded the command of God (Hebrew 11:7). Ellen G. White writes,

The wise men of this world talked of science and the fixed laws of nature, and declared that there could be no variation in these laws, and that this message of Noah could not possibly be true. The talented men of Noah’s time set themselves in league against God’s will and purpose, and scorned the message and the messenger that he had sent. When they could not move Noah from his firm and implicit

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trust in the word of God, they pointed to him as a fanatic, as a ranting old man, full of superstition and madness. Thus they condemned him because he would not be turned from his purpose by reasonings and theories of men. It was true that Noah could not controvert their philosophies, or refute the claims of science so called; but he could proclaim the word of God; for he knew it contained the infinite wisdom of the creator, and, as he sounded it everywhere, it lost none of its force and reality because men of the world treated him with ridicule and contempt.⁵

Abraham—Ellen G. White writes,

‘By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.’ Hebrews 11:3. Abraham’s unquestioning obedience is one of the most striking evidences of faith to be found in all the Bible. To him, faith was ‘the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.’ Verse 1. Relying upon the divine promise, without the least outward assurance of its fulfillment, he abandoned home and kindred and native land, and went forth, he knew not whither, to follow where God should lead. . . . He could not even explain his course of action so as to be understood by his friends. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and his motives and actions were not comprehended by his idolatrous kindred.⁶

Christ—Christ was tempted to doubt the Word of the Lord in the wilderness of temptation. He had the same tools of science and philosophy available to Him. He could have used science to prove His divinity by turning stones into bread. He was also tempted by philosophy to doubt God’s Word. Would God leave His son in the wilderness for forty days without food and companionship? Instead he answered, “It is written” (Matt 4:4, 7, 10).

Biblical Epistemology

When Pilot asked, “What is truth” (John 18:38), he did not realize that he was standing in the presence of the one who is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:1).

God wants us to know Him, the only true God (John 17:3). This knowledge is available in Jesus Christ and His Word, the Bible. Paul warns that knowledge of God does not come through human means of achieving knowledge. In its wisdom the world does not know God (1 Cor 1:21). We will be cheated if we attempt to know God through philosophy, the traditions of men, or the basic principles of the world (Col 2:8–10). It is only in Christ that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid (Col 2:3 cf. 1 Cor 1:30, John 1:17, 1 John 5:20).

⁵ *Signs of the Times* (April 18, 1895): 243–44.

⁶ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 126.

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Truth is not an intellectual concept. We know the doctrine when we will to do God's will (John 7:17), and we know the truth when we walk in it (Ps 26:3).

Since we can be blinded by the gods of this age (2 Cor 4:4), we must cast down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God (2 Cor 10:5). Empiricism is not the way to knowledge, for if we are not willing to listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will we be persuaded though one come back from the dead (Luke 16:31). The Jews seek empirical knowledge, and the Greeks philosophical knowledge, but God will destroy the wisdom of the wise and the understanding of the prudent, for knowledge of God does not come through human wisdom, but through Christ, who is the power and the wisdom of God. The cross of Christ is foolishness and a stumbling block to those who seek empirical and philosophical foundations apart from Christ (1 Cor 1:18–25).

Ellen White and Epistemology

A major theme of Ellen White's writing was the authority of the Bible. She addressed this topic in many different contexts. For her, the Bible was the foundational framework and authority for every aspect of our lives. Ellen White specifically affirms the authority of the Bible in a number of areas. The statements quoted in the appendix will summarize the overarching role that Ellen White gave to the authority of the Bible.

Faith and Freedom

The principle of *sola scriptura* has implications for the nature of faith and freedom. The biblical concept is distinct from the humanistic concepts of the Enlightenment and beyond.

Faith—The humanistic concept of faith may be outlined as follows:

The process generally starts with doubt—attempting to prove the validity of an assertion in order to offer it as truth—as worthy of one's faith.

It relies upon genius, creativity, initiative, freedom of exploration, and capabilities of mankind.

It relies upon the five senses as a basis for collecting the relevant data.

It looks for patterns and integrates the data and interprets it on the basis of a paradigm which interprets our common experience and understanding of the world.

A hypothesis is formed which leads to testable predictions which results in a new round of observations.

The result is a probability statement as to what things are like or as to how new pieces of data entering the system will relate to the old.

In summary, the data is brought together in such a way as to yield a conclusion, a faith statement as to how things probably are. The conclusion is in the hand of mankind. It is under human control, it is a human achievement, and it is created upon a human basis such as reason or some other faculty of mankind.

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The Biblical concept of faith is just the reverse:

Faith is not a human creation; it is the gift of God (Eph 2:8) in order that faith might not rest on the wisdom of man but in the power of God (1 Cor 2:4, 5). For Christ himself is the author and finisher of our faith (Heb 12:2).

The spirit and Word work together. “No man can create faith. The Spirit operating upon and enlightening the human mind creates faith in God. In the Scriptures faith is stated to be the gift of God, powerful unto salvation, enlightening the hearts of those who search for truth as for hidden treasure.”⁷

Faith is not built upon an external foundation, but is itself the assurance, the conviction, the evidence of things not seen (Heb 11:1).

Faith in the Word of God is not based upon humanistically-derived knowledge; rather faith itself is the foundation of knowledge. “By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God.” (Heb 11:3). “Only in the light of revelation can it [nature] be read aright.”⁸ “Faith is the key of knowledge.”⁹ It is the basis for discerning between truth and error.¹⁰

Faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Rom 11:17). The assurance and evidence for faith is God’s Word.¹¹

To attempt to use the data of reason as criteria for determining whether Scripture is the Word of God is to doubt that which has already been declared by God. It is similar to Christ’s temptation in the wilderness, namely, to doubt that He was the Son of God after “it had already been affirmed by the Word of God. Genuine faith has its foundation in the promises and provisions of the Scriptures.”¹²

Freedom—The humanistic concept of freedom is also radically different from the Biblical concept.

The humanistic concept of epistemological freedom is that of autonomy. Not only are we free from every human institution, but we are also free from the authority of the Bible, the Word of God. The possibility of truth in the Bible must be determined on a humanistic basis rather than by its divine inspiration.

The enlightenment taught that we are absolutely free. We start from a position of complete neutrality and “objectivity” to decide for or against God. But Christ said, if you are not for me you are against me (Matt 12:30; Luke 11:23). We are either servants of Satan and sin, or of Christ; there is no neutral ground (John 8:34; Rom 6:15–23).

Humanistic methodology states that we are absolutely free to discover the truth. Christ turns this one hundred and eighty degrees. You shall know the

⁷ Ellen G. White, in *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 7:940.

⁸ Ellen G. White, *Education*, 134.

⁹ Ellen G. White, *Education*, 24, *Desire of Ages*, 139.

¹⁰ Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, 1:346, *Testimonies to Ministers*, 229.

¹¹ Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, 2:243.

¹² Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*, 72; cf. *Gospel Workers*, 260; *Early Writings*, 72.

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truth, and the truth shall set you free (John 8:32; Rom 8:3; Gal 5:1; Rom 6:22). The truth is not some concept or “fact.” It is Jesus Christ—“I am the way, the truth and the life” (John 14:6).

Mission for the Seventh-day Adventist Church

The mission of our church stands upon a unique and specific epistemology. The call to give the totality of God’s message to the world at the end of time is not a call for an epistemological synthesis of what is available in the cafeteria line—a little empiricism here and a little rationalism there. It is a specific call for a people who are willing to take, as the basis for their message, the Bible and the *Bible only*, as opposed to all other epistemological systems.

But God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority—not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain “Thus saith the Lord” in its support.¹³

The doctrines of *sola scriptura* and *sola gratia*—*sola fide* are parallel doctrines. They were understood in tandem with each other at the time of the Reformation. If one is lost, the other will eventually be lost as well. For example, if one must go through a humanistic foundation to determine that salvation is by grace, salvation is no longer by grace, but by the system that founded that knowledge.

Sola Gratia

There is nothing I can do on my own to obtain righteousness

Righteousness is not to be manipulated by humans

Righteousness rests completely upon the gift of God.

Works follow naturally from the receipt of the gift of God’s salvation.

Works never form the basis of our salvation.

Sola Scriptura

There is nothing I can do on my own to obtain special revelation.

Revelation is not to be manipulated by humans.

Revelation rests completely upon the Gift of God.

Epistemological works follow naturally from the receipt of God’s foundation.

Humanistic epistemologies are not the true foundation of our knowledge.

The two doctrines are analogous and they are really one—God’s gift of Himself to us in order that we might know Him, the only true God (John 17:3).

¹³ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 595.

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The precious understanding of righteousness by faith *alone* will stand only so long as we place beside it the twin doctrine of the foundational authority of the Bible *alone*. Just as in 1888 the church made a new commitment to the doctrine of righteousness by faith, so in 2003 let us reaffirm our commitment to the authority of the Bible.

God has given us reason, senses, emotions, aesthetic appreciation, material goods, talents, and much more. He has given them to us for our use and enjoyment to His glory. *Sola scriptura* does not take away from the important role that each of these plays in our lives. But it does mean that God has provided a foundation and structure within which each of these gifts may be properly used. When we use them apart from the foundation of God's Word, we act autonomously from Him.

The foundational authority of the Bible may be illustrated by my house. It has a foundation upon which it is built and a set of plans that guided its construction. It also has a front door, windows, a kitchen, bedrooms, a study, and a roof, etc. All of these features are important to my house, but they will never become the foundation. If my house were to be turned upside down so that it rested upon its roof, my house would collapse.

So also, God has given us reason, our five senses, emotions, talents, friendship, and many other things. He wants us to enjoy them and use them to their fullest to His glory (1 Cor 1:31). But if we make one or all of them the foundation of our life, our world will collapse.

It is tempting to found our understanding of the world upon a synthesis of two epistemologies, as did the scholastics. Some prefer to build their house on the rock *and* the sand rather than on the Rock *alone*. But we cannot serve two masters (Matt 6:24). Humanism and biblical authority do not mix. It is like asking the Redskins to play the White Sox. Whose field will be used? Whose ball will be in place? Who will umpire the game? Whose rules will we use? Imagine kicking a football to a baseball batter. There is no synthesis between the two games. Either we will invite the one to join the other or visa versa.

Paul warns us not to be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our mind. The Greek verb translated "transformed" comes from the same verb used in Mark 9:2, when Jesus was "transfigured." It is through the truth that we are sanctified—not the "truth" that we generate ourselves, but the truth that comes from the Word of God (John 17:17–19). While we once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, we have been made alive together with Christ (Eph 2:1–8).

We tend to emphasize conversion of the heart. But conversion is also conversion of the mind. It is a change of direction of one's thinking: a direction that is no longer energized by the humanism of the world, but is directed by God's Word. God wants us to be converted in our mind, to make a change in direction, so that we see things from the perspective of His Word rather than from the perspective of this world.

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The Word of God can stand by itself. It does not need to be propped up by our own epistemologies. Both Ellen White and the reformers stated that when we read the Bible it is as if God were in the room speaking to us. The Word of God is powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword (Heb 4:12; cf. 1 Cor 1:24, 25; Eph 1:15–21). It is that Word which brought forth creation. It is that Word which brought hearing to the deaf, sight to the blind, life to the dead. And that Word can make its way into our own hearts and minds if we open our lives to it.

The epistemological path that we take will determine our concept of God, ourselves, nature, and history. Do we accept the Bible as the divinely revealed Word of God? Do we wish to worship the God Who spoke and there was light, Who lovingly bent over the clay to form the features of Adam, Who led Israel across the Red Sea into the land of Canaan, Who came to live among us and die for our sins, Who arose bodily to return to His heavenly Father, Who is now ministering for us in the heavenly sanctuary, and Who will soon literally, visibly return a second time for us? Or do we worship a god who either cannot or will not operate in history, a god who does not communicate with us directly and openly, but who is only known by innuendo through the speculations of our science and philosophy, and who is finally limited by our science and our philosophy—by the world as we perceive it? And how do we look at Jesus? Was He the product of His age, so that we cannot trust His testimony about the existence of Adam, Noah, and Moses? God has revealed Himself to us because He wants us to know Him, the *only* true God (John 17:3).

As a church we have a mission to look at the world from God's perspective rather than at God from the perspective of the world. We have the challenge to teach our children how to think Biblically rather than humanistically. We can only do that when we have been converted in heart and mind.

Are we willing to yield our senses and reason to the authority of God's Word? Are we willing to submit to God not only in heart, but also in mind, or do we desire to take the Word of God into our own control?

Lord, I give you my all. I give you my heart, my house, my car, my family, my emotions, but my mind—no Lord, my mind is the foundation of my life—I would lose my autonomy, Sir—I will not yield my mind, for my mind is mine and mine *alone*.

Appendix: Pertinent Ellen G. White Comments
General Statements about the Authority of the Bible:

“The Bible is God's voice speaking to us just as surely as though we could hear Him with our ears. The word of the living God is not merely written, but spoken. Do we receive the Bible as the oracle of God? If we realized the importance of this Word, with what awe would we open it, and with what earnestness would we search its precepts. The reading and contemplating of the Scriptures would be regarded as an audience with the Most High” (HP 134).

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“All human teaching should be subordinate to the oracles of God” (GC 204)

“He [Christ] pointed to the Scriptures as of unquestionable authority, and we should do the same. The Bible is to be presented as the word of the infinite God, as the end of all controversy and the foundation of all faith” (COL 39, 40).

“Leave the impression upon the mind that the Bible, and the Bible alone, is our rule of faith, and that the sayings and doings of men are not to be a criterion for our doctrines or actions” (CS 84).

“The Bible, and the Bible alone, is to be our creed, and sole bond of union; all who bow to this Holy Word will be in harmony. Our own views and ideas must not control our efforts. Man is fallible, but God’s Word is infallible” (1 SM 416).

Guide to Salvation

“In His word, God has committed to men the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the revealer of doctrines, and the test of experience” (GC, vii).

“Let the Bible decide every question that is essential to man’s salvation” (MM 91).

“The Bible is an unerring guide” (4T 312).

Scriptures a Safeguard

“‘To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.’ Isaiah 8:20. The people of God are directed to the Scriptures as their safeguard against the influence of false teachers and the delusive power of spirits of darkness. . . . The last great delusion is soon to open before us. Antichrist is to perform his marvelous works in our sight. So closely will the counterfeit resemble the true that it will be impossible to distinguish between them except by the Holy Scriptures. By their testimony every statement and every miracle must be tested . . . None but those who have fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible will stand through the last great conflict” (GC 593, 594).

“Only those who have been diligent students of the Scriptures and who have received the love of the truth will be shielded from the powerful delusion that takes the world captive. By the Bible testimony these will detect the deceiver in his disguise. To all the testing time will come. By the sifting of temptation the genuine Christian will be revealed. Are the people of God now so firmly estab-

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lished upon His word that they would not yield to the evidence of their senses? Would they, in such a crisis, cling to the Bible and the Bible only?” (GC 625).

“Jesus met Satan with the words, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God’ (Matt. 4:4). In every temptation the weapon of His warfare was the Word of God. Satan demanded of Christ a miracle as a sign of His divinity. But that which is greater than all miracles, a firm reliance upon a ‘Thus saith the Lord’ was a sign that could not be controverted. So long as Christ held to this position, the tempter could gain no advantage.

“A familiarity with the Word of God is our only hope. Those who diligently search the Scriptures will not accept Satan’s delusions as the truth of God” (GC 625).

Basis of faith

“Parents need to reform; ministers need to reform; they need God in their households. If they would see a different state of things, they must bring His word into their families and must make it their counselor. They must teach their children that it is the voice of God addressed to them, and is to be implicitly obeyed. They should patiently instruct their children, kindly and untiringly teach them how to live in order to please God. The children of such a household are prepared to meet the sophistries of infidelity. They have accepted the Bible as the basis of their faith, and they have a foundation that cannot be swept away by the incoming tide of skepticism” (PP 143).

“I am fully in harmony with you in your work when you present the Bible, and the Bible alone, as the foundation of our faith” (2SM 85).

“But faith is in no sense allied to presumption. Only he who has true faith is secure against presumption. For presumption is Satan’s counterfeit of faith. Faith claims God’s promises, and brings forth fruit in obedience. Presumption also claims the promises, but uses them as Satan did, to excuse transgression. Faith would have led our first parents to trust the love of God, and to obey His commands. Presumption led them to transgress His law, believing that His great love would save them from the consequence of their sin. It is not faith that claims the favor of Heaven without complying with the conditions on which mercy is to be granted. Genuine faith has its foundation in the promises and provisions of the Scriptures” (DA 126).

“This book is the voice of God speaking to us. The Bible opens to us the words of life; for it makes us acquainted with Christ who is our life. In order to have true, abiding faith in Christ, we must know Him as He is represented in the word” (FE 433).

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Basis of Morality

“The Bible should be read every day. It is the correct standard of right and wrong and of moral principle” (SI, March 20, 1884, 177).

“It is, in all its precepts and requirements, as pure as the character of God and as elevated as His throne” (3T 314).

Test of Inspiration

“True Christianity receives the word of God as the great treasure house of inspired truth and the test of all inspiration” (GC 193).

Test for the Operation of the Holy Spirit

“The Spirit was not given—nor can it ever be bestowed—to supersede the Bible; for the Scriptures explicitly state that the word of God is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested” (GC vii).

“Even the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart is to be tested by the Word of God. The Spirit which inspired the Scriptures, always leads to the Scriptures” (1SM 43).

Guide to Life

“The Christian evidence that we need, is found not in the experience of men, but in our Bibles. The Word of God is the man of our counsel; for it brings us down from age to age, bearing its testimony to the unchangeableness of the truth. . . . Give the Word its honored position as a guide in the home. Let it be regarded as the Counselor in every difficulty, the standard of every practice. . . . We have a Guidebook, the Word of God, and we are inexcusable if we miss the way to heaven, for plain directions have been given us. . . . The Bible presents a perfect standard of character; it is an infallible guide under all circumstances, even to the end of the journey of life” (ML 25).

“The Bible is an unerring guide” (4T 312).

“All who do not earnestly search the Scriptures and submit every desire and purpose of life to that unerring test, all who do not seek God in prayer for a knowledge of His will, will surely wander from the right path and fall under the deception of Satan” (ST 192).

“The Bible presents a perfect standard of character. This sacred book, inspired by God, and written by holy men, is a perfect guide under all circumstances of life” (FE 100).

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Rule of Conscience

“This led him [John Huss] to adopt for his own guidance, and to preach to others for theirs, the maxim that the precepts of Scripture, conveyed through the understanding, are a rule of the conscience; In other words, that God speaking in the Bible, and not the church speaking through the priesthood, is the one infallible guide” (GC 102).

Standard of Character

“The Bible is God’s will expressed to man. It is the only perfect standard of character, and marks out the duty of man in every circumstance of life” (4T 312).

Only Basis of Happiness

“He who is following the divine guidance has found the only true source of saving grace and real happiness, and has gained the power of imparting happiness to all around him. No man can really enjoy life without religion” (CT 53).

“Through the study of the Scriptures we obtain a correct knowledge of how to live so as to enjoy the greatest amount of unalloyed happiness” (3T 314).

Basis of Knowledge and Truth

“In the prevailing systems of education, human philosophy had taken the place of divine revelation. Instead of the heaven-given standard of truth, men had accepted a standard of their own devising” (Ed 74).

“‘Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth.’ The word of God should be made the great educating power. How shall students know the truth, except by a close, earnest, persevering study of the word? Here is the grand stimulus, the hidden force which quickens the mental and physical powers, and directs the life into right channels. Here in the word is wisdom, poetry, history, biography, and the most profound philosophy. Here is a study that quickens the mind into a vigorous and healthy life, and awakens it to the highest exercise. It is impossible to study the Bible with a humble, teachable spirit, without developing and strengthening the intellect. Those who become best acquainted with the wisdom and purpose of God as revealed in His word, become men and women of mental strength; and they may become efficient workers with the great Educator, Jesus Christ. . . . Christ has given His people the words of truth, and all are called to act a part in making them known to the world. . . . There is no sanctification aside from the truth—the word. Then how essential that it should be understood by every one!” (FE 432).

“As professed teachers from God come to us declaring that they have a message from God, it is proper to inquire carefully, “How do we know that this

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is truth?” Jesus has told us that ‘false prophets shall arise and shall deceive many.’ But we need not be deceived; for the Word of God gives us a test whereby we may know what is truth. The prophet says, ‘To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them’” (E.G. White Comments, 7BC 952).

“We have a Bible full of the most precious truth. It contains the alpha and the omega of knowledge” (GW 308).

“Men of the greatest intellects, if not guided by the word of God in their research, become bewildered; they cannot comprehend the Creator or His works. But set the mind to grasp and measure eternal truth, summon it to effort by delving for the jewels of truth in the rich mine of the word of God, and it will never become dwarfed and enfeebled, as when left to dwell upon commonplace subjects” (FE 84).

“The Bible is our textbook” (CSW 56).

“The Bible must be made the foundation for all study” (FE 451).

“Without the Bible we should have been left to conjectures and fables in regard to the occurrences of past ages. Of all the books that have flooded the world, be they ever so valuable, the Bible is the Book of books, and is most deserving of the closest study and attention. It gives not only the history of the creation of this world, but a description of the world to come. It contains instruction concerning the wonders of the universe, and it reveals to our understanding the Author of the heavens and the earth. It unfolds a simple and complete system of theology and philosophy” (FE 129).

“We must stand barricaded by the truths of the Bible. The canopy of truth is the only canopy under which we can stand safely” (MM 88).

“Cold, philosophical speculations and scientific research in which God is not acknowledged are a positive injury. And the evil is aggravated when, as is often the case, books placed in the hands of the young, accepted as authority and depended upon in their education, are from authors avowedly infidel. Through all the thoughts presented by these men their poisonous sentiments are interwoven. The study of such books is like handling black coals; a student cannot be undefiled in mind who thinks along the line of skepticism” (CT 423, 424).

Basis of Education

“In our training-schools the Bible is to be made the basis of all education” (FE 490).

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“The Bible should not be brought into our schools to be sandwiched in between infidelity. The Bible must be made the groundwork and subject matter of education. . . . It should be used as the word of the living God, and esteemed as first, and last, and best in everything. Then will be seen true spiritual growth” (FE 474).

“Bible study is especially needed in the schools. Students should be rooted and grounded in divine truth, Their attention should be called, not to the assertions of men, but to the word of God. Above all other books, the word of God must be our study, the great textbook, the basis of all education; and our children are to be educated in the truths found therein, irrespective of previous habits and customs” (6T 131, 132).

Authority over the Senses

“Are the people of God now so firmly established upon His word that they would not yield to the evidence of their senses? Would they, in such a crisis, cling to the Bible and the Bible only?” (GC 625).

Basis of Knowledge of God and Christ

“Searching the Scriptures alone will bring the knowledge of the true God and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent” (FE 415).

“The ancient philosophers prided themselves on their superior knowledge. Let us read the inspired apostle’s understanding of the matter. ‘Professing themselves to be wise,’ he says, ‘they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. . . . Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator’ (Rom. 1:22–25). In its human wisdom the world cannot know God. Its wise men gather an imperfect knowledge of God from His created works, and then in their foolishness they exalt nature and the laws of nature above nature’s God. Those who have not a knowledge of God through an acceptance of the revelation He has made of Himself in Christ, will obtain only an imperfect knowledge of Him in nature; and this knowledge, so far from giving elevated conceptions of God, and bringing the whole being into conformity to His will, will make men idolaters. Professing themselves to be wise, they will become fools” (1SM 295).

Foundation for the Study of Science

“Apart from Christ, science is misleading and philosophy is foolishness” (MM 91).

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“This is the treasure that is found in the Scriptures. The Bible is God’s great lesson book, His great educator. The foundation of all true science is contained in the Bible. Every branch of knowledge may be found by searching the word of God. And above all else it contains the science of all sciences, the science of salvation. The Bible is the mine of the unsearchable riches of Christ” (COL 101).

“The ancient philosophers prided themselves on their superior knowledge. Let us read the inspired apostle’s understanding of the matter. ‘Professing themselves to be wise,’ he says, ‘they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. . . . Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator’ (Rom. 1:22–25). In its human wisdom the world cannot know God. Its wise men gather an imperfect knowledge of God from His created works, and then in their foolishness they exalt nature and the laws of nature above nature’s God. Those who have not a knowledge of God through an acceptance of the revelation He has made of Himself in Christ, will obtain only an imperfect knowledge of Him in nature; and this knowledge, so far from giving elevated conceptions of God, and bringing the whole being into conformity to His will, will make men idolaters. Professing themselves to be wise, they will become fools. . . . Those who think they can obtain a knowledge of God aside from His Representative, whom the Word declares is ‘the express image of his person’ (Heb. 1:3), will need to become fools in their own estimation before they can be wise. It is impossible to gain a perfect knowledge of God from nature alone; for nature itself is imperfect. In its imperfection it cannot represent God, it cannot reveal the character of God in its moral perfection. But Christ came as a personal Savior to the world. He represented a personal God” (ISM 295).

“Since God is the source of all true knowledge, it is, as we have seen, the first object of education to direct our minds to His own revelation of Himself. Adam and Eve received knowledge through direct communion with God; and they learned of Him through His works. All created things, in their original perfection, were an expression of the thought of God. To Adam and Eve nature was teeming with divine wisdom. But by transgression man was cut off from learning of God through direct communion and, to a great degree, through His works. The earth, marred and defiled by sin, reflects but dimly the Creator’s glory. It is true that His object lessons are not obliterated. Upon every page of the great volume of His created works may still be traced His handwriting. Nature still speaks of her Creator. Yet these revelations are partial and imperfect. And in our fallen state, with weakened powers and restricted vision, we are incapable of interpreting aright. We need the fuller revelation of Himself that God has given

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in His written word. . . . The Holy Scriptures are the perfect standard of truth, and as such should be given the highest place in education” (Ed 16, 17).

“It is the entrance of God’s word that ‘ giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.’ Psalm 119:130. His word is given for our instruction; there is nothing in it that is defective or misleading. The Bible is not to be tested by men’s ideas of science, but science is to be brought to the test of the unerring standard. . . . Yet the study of the sciences is not to be neglected, Books must be used for this purpose; but they should be in harmony with the Bible, for that is the standard” (CT 425, 426).

“The opinions of great men, the theories of science, falsely so-called, are blended with the truths of Holy Writ” (FE 182).

“The deepest students of science are constrained to recognize in nature the working of infinite power. But to man’s unaided reason, nature’s teaching cannot but be contradictory and disappointing. Only in the light of revelation can it be read aright. ‘Through faith we understand.’ Hebrews 11:3.

“‘In the beginning God.’ Genesis 1:1. Here alone can the mind in its eager questioning, fleeing as the dove to the ark, find rest. Above, beneath, beyond, abides Infinite Love, working out all things to accomplish ‘the good pleasure of His goodness.’ 2 Thessalonians 1:11.

“‘The invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are . . . perceived through the things that are made, even His everlasting power and divinity.’ Romans 1:20, R.V. But their testimony can be understood only through the aid of the divine Teacher. ‘What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.’ 1 Corinthians 2:11.

“‘When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth.’ John 16:13. Only by the aid of that Spirit who in the beginning ‘was brooding upon the face of the waters;’ of that Word by whom ‘all things were made;’ of that ‘true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world,’ can the testimony of science be rightly interpreted. Only by their guidance can its deepest truths be discerned.

“Only under the direction of the Omniscient One shall we, in the study of His works, be enabled to think His thoughts after Him” (Ed 134).

“Apart from Christ we are still incapable of interpreting rightly the language of nature. The most difficult and humiliating lesson that man has to learn is his own inefficiency in depending upon human wisdom, and the sure failure of his efforts to read nature correctly. Of himself he cannot interpret nature without placing it above God. . . .

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“God has permitted a flood of light to be poured upon the world in the discoveries of science and art; but when professedly scientific men reason upon these subjects from a merely human point of view, they are sure to err. The greatest minds, if not guided by the word of God, become bewildered in their attempts to investigate the relations of science and revelation. The Creator and His works are beyond their comprehension; and because these cannot be explained by natural laws, Bible history is pronounced unreliable.

“Those who question the reliability of the Scripture records have let go their anchor and are left to beat about upon the rocks of infidelity. When they find themselves incapable of measuring the Creator and His works by their own imperfect knowledge of science, they question the existence of God and attribute infinite power to nature.

“In true science there can be nothing contrary to the teaching of the word of God, for both have the same Author. A correct understanding of both will always prove them to be in harmony. Truth, whether in nature or in revelation, is harmonious with itself in all its manifestations. But the mind not enlightened by God’s Spirit will ever be in darkness in regard to His power. This is why human ideas in regard to science so often contradict the teaching of God’s word” (8T 251, 258).

“In losing the garments of holiness, they lost the light that had illuminated nature. No longer could they read it aright. They could not discern the character of God in His works. So today man cannot of himself read aright the teaching of nature. Unless guided by divine wisdom, he exalts nature and the laws of nature above nature’s God. This is why mere human ideas in regard to science so often contradict the teaching of God’s word. But for those who receive the light of the life of Christ, nature is again illuminated. In the light shining from the cross, we can rightly interpret nature’s teaching.

“He who has a knowledge of God and His word through personal experience has a settled faith in the divinity of the Holy Scriptures. He has proved that God’s word is truth, and he knows that truth can never contradict itself. He does not test the Bible by men’s ideas of science; he brings these ideas to the test of the unerring standard. He knows that in true science there can be nothing contrary to the teaching of the word; since both have the same Author, a correct understanding of both will prove them to be in harmony. Whatever in so-called scientific teaching contradicts the testimony of God’s word is mere human guesswork” (MH 462).

“God has permitted a flood of light to be poured upon the world in both science and art; but when professedly scientific men treat upon these subjects from a merely human point of view, they will assuredly come to wrong conclusions. It may be innocent to speculate beyond what God’s word has revealed, if our theories do not contradict facts found in the Scriptures; but those who leave

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the word of God, and seek to account for His created works upon scientific principles, are drifting without chart or compass upon an unknown ocean. The greatest minds, if not guided by the word of God in their research, become bewildered in their attempts to trace the relations of science and revelation. Because the Creator and His works are so far beyond their comprehension that they are unable to explain them by natural laws, they regard Bible history as unreliable. Those who doubt the reliability of the records of the Old and New Testaments, will be led to go a step further, and doubt the existence of God; and then, having lost their anchor, they are left to beat about upon the rocks of infidelity” (PP 113).

“When man is reconciled to God, nature speaks to him in words of heavenly wisdom, bearing testimony to the eternal truth of God’s Word. As Christ tells us the meaning of the things in nature, the science of true religion flashes forth, explaining the relation of the law of God to the natural and spiritual world” (E. G. White Comments, 3 BC 1144).

“He who has a knowledge of God and His Word has a settled faith in the divinity of the Holy Scriptures. He does not test the Bible by man’s ideas of science. He brings these ideas to the test of the unerring standard. He knows that God’s word is truth, and truth can never contradict itself; whatever in the teaching of so-called science contradicts the truth of God’s revelation is mere human guesswork.

“To the really wise, scientific research opens vast fields of thought and information” (8T 325).

“Science and nature are exalted. Men consider themselves wiser than the Word of God, wiser even than God; and instead of planting their feet on the unmovable foundation, and bringing everything to the test of God’s word, they test that word by their own ideas of science and nature. And if it seems not to agree with their scientific ideas, it is discarded as unworthy of credence. Thus the great standard by which to test doctrines and character is set aside for human standards” (ST, March 27, 1844, 194).

“But apart from Bible history, geology can prove nothing” (PP 112).

Basis of An Understanding of History

“The Bible is the most ancient and the most comprehensive history that men possess. It came fresh from the fountain of eternal truth, and throughout the ages a divine hand has preserved its purity. It lights up the far-distant past, where human research in vain seeks to penetrate. In God’s word only do we behold the power that laid the foundations of the earth and that stretched out the heavens.

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Here only do we find an authentic account of the origin of nations. Here only is given a history of our race unsullied by human pride or prejudice,

“In the annals of human history the growth of nations, the rise and fall of empires, appear as dependent on the will and prowess of man. The shaping of events seems, to a great degree, to be determined by his power, ambition, or caprice. But in the word of God the curtain is drawn aside, and we behold, behind, above, and through all the play and counterplay of human interests and power and passions, the agencies of the all-merciful One, silently, patiently working out the counsel of His own will” (Ed 173).

“The Bible, and the Bible only, gives a correct view of these things. Here are revealed the great final scenes in the history of our world, events that already are casting their shadows before, the sound of their approach causing the earth to tremble and men’s hearts to fail them for fear” (Ed 180).

“The Bible is the most instructive history that men possess. It came fresh from the fountain of eternal truth, and a divine hand has preserved its purity through all the ages. It lights up the far-distant past, where human research seeks vainly to penetrate. In God’s word we behold the power that laid the foundation of the earth and that stretched out the heavens. Here only can we find a history of our race unsullied by human prejudice or human pride. Here are recorded the struggles, the defeats, and the victories of the greatest men this world has ever known. Here the great problems of duty and destiny are unfolded. The curtain that separates the visible from the invisible world is lifted, and we behold the conflict of the opposing forces of good and evil, from the first entrance of sin to the final triumph of righteousness and truth; and all is but a revelation of the character of God” (PP 596).

Key to Philosophy

“The Christian believer possesses the key to true philosophy” (ST, Jan. 28, 1897, 4).

“Apart from Christ, science is misleading and philosophy is foolishness” (IMM 97).

“All the philosophies of human nature have led to confusion and shame when God has not been recognized as all in all” (8T 322).

“Christian knowledge bears its own stamp of unmeasured superiority in all that concerns the preparation for the future, immortal life. It distinguishes the Bible reader and believer, who has been receiving the precious treasures of truth, from the skeptic and the believer in pagan philosophy.

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“Cleave to the word, ‘It is written.’ Cast out of the mind the dangerous, obtrusive theories which, if entertained, will hold the mind in bondage so that the man shall not become a new creature in Christ” (MM 89).

Basis of Principles of True Psychology

“The true principles of psychology are found in the Holy Scriptures” (ML 176).

General Warnings about Placing Other Authorities Above the Bible

“The Word of the Lord is not to be judged by a human standard” (ST 301).

“Men consider themselves wiser than the Word of God, wiser even than God; and instead of planting their feet on the immovable foundation, and bringing everything to the test of God’s word, they test that word by their own ideas of science and nature, and if it seems not to agree with their scientific ideas, it is discarded as unworthy of credence” (ST, March 27, 1844, 1).

“Many attempt to judge of the Creator and His works by their own imperfect knowledge of science. They endeavor to determine the nature and attributes and prerogatives of God, and indulge in speculative theories concerning the Infinite One” (MH 427).

“Man’s inventions are not only unreliable, they are dangerous; for they place man where God should be. They place the sayings of men where a ‘Thus saith the Lord’ should be” (COL 110).

Men “set up their judgment as superior to the work; and the Scripture which they do teach rests upon their own authority. Its divine authenticity is destroyed” (COL 39).

Basis of the Great Controversy

The theme of the Great Controversy is the authority of the Bible. With each reformer Ellen White reiterates that the Bible and the Bible *alone* was the basis of authority. One example will be given:

“Fearlessly did Luther defend the gospel from the attacks which came from every quarter. The word of God proved itself a weapon mighty in every conflict. With that word he warred against the usurped authority of the pope, and the rationalistic philosophy of the schoolmen, while he stood firm as a rock against the fanaticism that sought to ally itself with the reformation. Each of these opposing elements was in its own way setting aside the Holy Scriptures and exalting human wisdom as the source of religious truth and knowledge. Rationalism

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idolizes reason and makes this the criterion for religion. Romanism, claiming for her sovereign pontiff an inspiration descended in unbroken line from the apostles, and unchangeable through all time, gives ample opportunity for every species of extravagance and corruption to be concealed under the sanctity of the apostolic commission. The inspiration claimed by Munzer and his associates proceeded from no higher source than the vagaries of the imagination, and its influence was subversive of all authority, human or divine. True Christianity receives the word of God as the great treasure house of inspired truth and the test of inspiration” (GC 193).

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